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Pre-vote probe urged of SALT violations

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A full-scale Senate investigation of alleged Russian violation of the SALT treaties is being sought as a prelude to any vote on a joint congressional resolution that its critics call a de facto ratification of SALT II.

The investigation was called for yesterday by Sens. Robert W. Kasten Jr., R-Wis., and John Tower, R-Texas.

In related developments:

- Sen. Roger Jepsen, R-Iowa, asked President Reagan to provide Congress with an unclassified report on SALT and other arms-control violations by the Soviets.

- Jepsen and Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., in a letter to the head of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, sought answers to 21 questions, most concerning reports of treaty violations by the Soviets.

- The Senate Foreign Relations Committee prepared a staff report, to be released Monday, that generally supports the aims of the joint resolution.

The joint resolution was introduced by Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Charles Percy, R-Ill. It says: "To provide a basis for progress during the START negotiations, the United States shall continue to refrain from actions which would undercut SALT I and SALT II agreements, provided the Soviet Union shows equal restraint."

An opposing resolution, introduced by Sen. Jake Garn, R-Utah, urges the utmost caution in negotiating any arms reduction treaty with the Russians and says, among other things, any pact with them must provide for on-site inspection to insure verification.

In calling for an investigation, Kasten said, "It seems to be only prudent to have a full review of the Soviet Union's record on compliance.

"I think we also need to review our own ability to verify Soviet actions," Kasten said.

Tower, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, asked yesterday that no action be taken on the Percy resolution "until hearings I have recommended are completed."

In a letter to the president, Jepsen said the report on SALT violations is needed "before any floor action occurs on the Foreign Relations Committee Senate Joint Resolution in question."

Jepsen's letter questioned Reagan's support of the pending joint resolution on three grounds.

"First, you yourself, have stated that Soviet compliance with the key provisions of SALT II, involving constraints on warhead fractionation, cannot be verified by the United States. Your judgment on the unverifiability of Soviet warhead fractionation is supported by the Senate Armed Service Committee report on SALT II released in December 1979.

"Second, according to Defense Department and CIA assessments of the Soviet threat, the Soviets have not been showing restraint.

"Third, Soviet actions which would 'undercut' SALT II could be interpreted as entailing a higher degree of Soviet restraint beyond just complying with SALT II's provisions," the Jepsen letter said.

In seeking answers to their questions, Jepsen and Helms cited a growing list of reports the Soviets have violated SALT I and II and reminded Eugene Rostow, arms control agency director, "The issue of verifiability is at the heart of the arms control process."

"There is widespread sentiment in Congress that no significant progress in arms control can be made unless the people of the United States are assured of the verifiability of any agreement or proposed agreement," they said in a letter to Rostow.

The letter, dated July 8, also questioned whether the arms agency has been fully forthcoming with Congress on the issue of verifiability.

"We note that ACDA was very slow in re-creating the Verification Bureau and that even now, a year after you took office, the bureau has not been fully staffed.

"In addition," they said, "there are key issues of verifiability, to our knowledge, ACDA has neither examined nor reported to Congress despite the intense public interest in their resolution."

Rostow could not be reached for comment on the letter.

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